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ABSTRACT

In 1977, when women in West Germany (the Fedeal Republic of Germany) got the legal right to be employed outside the family against their husband's will, paragraph 1356 of the Civil Code, defining housework as the woman's duty, was abolished. Until then, heavy social pressure kept women close to home; in most cases, the choice of an outside occupation was limited to specific jobs and professions deemed suitable for women. In East Germany (the German Democratic Republic) during this time, an "equality paradise" ensured that women were equally literate, educated, and qualified. However, women were still expected to take care of children and household chores. With the collapse of East Germany, women's infrastructure disappeared, and the female employment rate plummeted. Today, while most women want to have an occupation outside the home and achieve some financial independence, relatively few women in Germany seem to want to have a meaningful lifetime career. Women generally accept that if they intend to pursue a career, they cannot have children; therefore, there is no effective lobby for an infrastructure that would make it easier to combine motherhood with professional life. Data clearly indicate tnat traditional roles have not significantly changed, except that employed women add an extra task to their domestic ones. Part 2 of this publication presents the stories of 11 contemporary women who have achieved high profile nationally or internationally, in academic or creative fields, in business, in sports, or in government. The document contains 25 references. (YLB)

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Society

Working Women in Contemporary Germany

Roles, Attitudes, and a Handful of Success Stories

by
Susan Stern

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PART I

Women in German Society

Note

The situation of women in society from the end of the Second World War to unification in 1990 was very different in the two Germanies. This brochure is primarily about women in West Germany (the Federal Republic of Germany) because after the integration of East Germany (the German Democratic Republic) into the Federal Republic, the values, legal system and social infrastructure of the West were imposed indiscriminately on the East. Almost overnight, the situation of women in East Germany became history. Today, Germany is one country, but 40 years of separation have left their mark and affected attitudes. Hence, there is occasional reference to women from the old *Länder* (former West Germany) and the new *Länder* (former East Germany).

The Good and the Bad News

"Equality between men and women has come a long way in Germany since the 3rd World Women's Conference in 1985. Nevertheless, it is our experience that the constitutional guarantee of equality and equal access to all resources do not automatically surmount all handicaps."

Claudia Nolte, Federal Minister for Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, in her speech to a plenary session of the 4th World Women's Conference, Beijing, 1995

The 4th World Women's Conference in Beijing, China in 1995 was yet another uncomfortable reminder: nowhere on this earth, it seems, are women getting anything like a fair deal. Even in countries of the so-called western civilized world, they are still struggling for some sort of parity with men. So the good news is that compared to women in many, perhaps even in most other nations, women in Germany are doing rather well for themselves. This is certainly the case on paper, since equal rights are enshrined in the Basic Law (constitution), and on federal and state legislative shelves there are stacks of supporting laws, articles and paragraphs designed to protect and promote members of the female sex. True enough, women in Germany (where they have a 2.2 million numerical advantage over men) are neither systematically persecuted nor downtrodden. They are to a great extent free to determine their lives, they are an indispensible part of the workforce, they are the mainstay of the family. They are also over-worked, underpaid, and in many subtle ways discriminated against.

Good Intentions

Reality is complicated, as can be surmised from a relatively recent amendment to the Basic Law. In 1994, the original article affirming the equality of men and women (Article 3:2) received an addendum: "The State supports the actual bringing about of equality between women and men and is working towards the removal of existing disadvantages." No need to say which sex is disadvantaged. However, the mere recognition that women are not equal in society can be taken as a positive sign - it indicates that the equality principle is at least on the agenda. This was demonstrated again in 1994 with the passing of the Second Equal Rights Act. In general it is fair to say that both makers and guardians of the law, countless commissions on the equality of the sexes, female-righters (sometimes male), feminists and a slew of other interested institutions and individuals are genuinely trying to improve the lot of women.

Traditional Values

What exactly is their lot? A quantified and qualified description would require volumes. In the good old days, German women were kept occupied by the three Ks - *Kinder, Küche und Kirche* (children, kitchen and church). During and after the Second World War, they marched into the vacuum left by their absent menfolk and proved themselves capable of performing manly deeds, from physically clearing the mountains of rubble from the streets to running farms, offices and businesses (without neglecting their household duties, of course). When the men returned, the women in the western part of Germany withdrew meekly (there was certainly no loud protest) to their kitchens. It took until 1977 - a mere 20 years ago - for West German women to have the legal right to be employed outside the family against their husband's will, and for paragraph 1356 of the Civil Code, defining housework as the woman's duty, to be abolished. This is not to say that all women were tied to the house until the late Seventies, but there was hefty social pressure on them not to venture too far away or for too long, especially if they had children. In most cases, the choice of an outside occupation was limited to specific jobs and professions (from secretary to teacher) deemed suitable for women *(Frauenberuf)*. But essentially, the world beyond the hearth remained male territory, and women were only tolerated there as long as they confined themselves to areas in which men were not interested and as long as they showed no competitive ambition.

Women in East Germany (GDR)

The situation in the GDR was rather different. There, the expression used to describe the relationship between men and women was "equality paradise" *(Gleichheitsparadies)*. This "paradise" was guaranteed by the constitution and supporting laws, but in contrast to the Federal Republic, as many women as men were employed outside the home (over 90 percent; in 1989, the employment rate for women was 98 percent as compared to 54 percent in the West). Women were equally literate, educated and qualified. The infrastructure necessary to take care of children while both parents were out at work was highly developed; the state provided crêches, kindergartens, schools, youth groups and camps. Abortion was readily available. Single mothers were socially acceptable. At about the time when West Germany was getting round to granting legal permission to married women to oppose their husbands and join the workforce (see above), the GDR had the highest rate of female labor force participation in the world.

However: the *Gleichheitsparadies* was certainly not all it was made out to be. Since women were expected to take care of children and household chores in addition to their outside work, they had a heavy double burden. Not even the introduction of policies designed to make a working mother's life easier *(Muttipolitik)* did much to improve the situation; on the contrary, "paid time off for housework, a state sponsored "baby year", expanded child care and special housing preference for women with children actually backfired ... women were seen as unreliable workers who were frequently absent. They were seen (and saw themselves) as unsuited for the more demanding or responsible positions." As a result, "discrimination was legitimized because of the "special" benefits women received." (quotes from Jennifer Davies). Women did not make it up the hierarchical ladder, either in politics or in the socialist enterprises; they did not earn as much as men in equivalent positions. They were considered an economic risk.

Nevertheless, the collapse of the GDR and the almost immediate introduction of the entire economic and social system of West Germany has turned out to be fairly devastating for many of the women of the former GDR. Their social infrastructure has disappeared, the female employment rate in the new *Länder* has plummeted to 73 percent and 77 percent of the long-term unemployed are women.

Plus Ça Change ...

"Success in industry is predicated on (a man) having the right partner ... A woman who requires more from her husband than he can give is not being supportive. If he gets home completely exhausted on Friday evening, Madame (sic) has no right to demand that he take the kids to Disneyland the next morning."

Eberhard von Brauchitsch (leading businessman), interviewed in
Der Spiegel, Sonderausgabe 1947 - 1997

Back to the Federal Republic; what has actually changed in the past 20 years? A lot and very little. Certainly, the *idea* that a woman has the right to participate as an equal in all areas of social (in the broadest sense) life has made considerable headway. Women are a lot more equal (or at least protected) on paper, and indeed, in people's heads. It is not politically correct to be verbally sexist, although the Germans are not quite as sensitive as the Americans (job applicants are still expected to state what sex they are on a curriculum vitae. They are also expected to give their age). Nor is it legal to be de facto sexist in selecting a person for a position. But the *gut feeling* (on the part of both women and men) that whatever her legal rights, a woman's top priority should be her family still prevails. And what a woman can do outside the home in theory (anything a man can do) is not what she can easily do in practice. The *Frauenberufe* mentioned above have remained the same; a survey by ***iw*** (Institute of German Industry) shows that in 1993, the overwhelming majority of women were employed in just ten trades or occupations, with office work heading the list, followed by merchandising (selling in stores), nursing, work associated with cleaning, social work, teaching, data-processing, unskilled jobs, bank and insurance sales and agricultural labor. As the magazine ***Stern*** more recently put it (28.5.97), "Women who want to succeed in business these days are best off in new or expanding sectors where they are least likely to tread on too many male toes." And the same article states that "only 6 percent of all parents would encourage their children to enter a field or profession not considered to be typically female". Equality, it would appear, is just another word.

Gender Jobs

The German language clearly distinguishes between males and females, so in newspaper adverts offering jobs, employers cannot be ambiguous as to the sex of the person they are seeking to hire. It is illegal to discriminate without very good reason. Nevertheless, a recent study shows that in major newspapers, 32 percent of all adverts for specialists and managers are directed exclusively at men, only three percent at women. Applicants are catching on to the illegality of such sex-specific advertising and are going to court (in a neat twist, a young man successfully sued recently because he was not considered for a secretarial job).

German law (federal and state) tends to favor affirmative action in giving preference to female job candidates who are as well qualified as their male competitors, especially in public sector areas where women are clearly under-represented, but the European Court in Luxemburg sees this as discrimination. More German rulings will be subjected to European scrutiny as more men who feel badly done by take legal action, or German courts pass the buck....

A Numerical Overview

"It's lonely here at the top; the only other woman I have any contact with is my secretary."
Birgit Ganz-Rathmann, Head of Personnel for the Cargo Division of Deutsche Bahn.

Today, around 55 percent of 15 to 65 year-old women are employed outside the house (around 40 percent of the work force). Of these, over 70 percent work in the tertiary (service) sector, and in low hierarchy positions (see above). Of the more than 15.5 million women in employment, about one third have part-time jobs. Well over 2 million women have jobs which pay less than DM 610.- (about $ 360.-) a month (below the social insurance level). In industry, women receive 74 percent of what men in equivalent positions earn.

Although women make up over 53 percent of high school *(Gymnasium)* students and 46 percent of university students, they rarely make it far up the career ladder after they finish their education. In the upper echelons of business, academia, administration, the media, and even in politics (where most parties now have quotas), women are vastly under-represented. At around the level of middle management, "German women hit the glass ceiling that limits upward mobility" (Philip Glouchevitch). A recent study *(Hoppenstedt)* shows that in large companies, women make up 3.2 percent of top management, and 5.5 percent of middle management; in small and medium-sized companies *(Mittelstand)*, they make up 8.8 percent of top management (and this because enterprising women start up their own businesses) and 16.2 percent of middle management. Of the 13,153 seats on the executive boards of Germany's 70,000 biggest companies, 496 are occupied by women and there is not a single lady CEO (*Vorstandsvorsitzende*) among them; there is one solitary woman in the combined executive boards of Germany's ten largest concerns (figures given in *Die Zeit*, 18 October 1996). In the ivory tower world, things are no better; whereas women make up almost 70 percent of the non-academic staff and occupy over 73 percent of the part-time jobs, only 6.9 percent have professorial rank, and only 2.9 percent are full professors with the German ranking of C4 (figures given in ***GeschäftsWelt,*** July 1996). In public administration, women are equally difficult to find at the top; the higher the positions, the fewer the women who occupy them. On the very highest levels the percentage of women dwindles to practically zero, according to a 1995 publication on the equality of men and women in federal and state jobs by Maria Böhmer of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. The dramatic disproportion of men to women in top public jobs leads Ms. Böhmer to quote Ernst Benda, former president of the Federal Supreme Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*), who attributes it to "structural discrimination". This occurs when the discrepancy in a particular function or area is statistically manifest, but the way in which the discrimination is practiced is difficult or impossible to nail down or prove empirically.

Job versus Career

career: *a profession or occupation which one trains for and pursues as a lifework*

profession: *a vocation or occupation requiring advanced education and training, and involving intellectual skills, as medicine, law. theology engineering, teaching, etc.*

job: *a position of employment; situation; work*

*(definitions taken from **Webster's New World Dictionary**)*

In any discussion about women in the workforce, it is important to emphasize the difference between having a job and pursuing a career. Women tend to have jobs. Jobs are incidental to other pursuits in life; they can be taken up, dropped and resumed more or less at will. They do not necessarily conflict with other major lifeworks, such as the raising of children. Careers, on the other hand, require dedication and energy, steady commitment, a willingness to set aside other considerations to achieve the desired results. Careers require a considerable initial investment in terms of time (especially in Germany, where education is an exceptionally long process) and money (albeit public money, since education in Germany is state funded). Wherever women are the primary child-raisers in a society it is difficult for them to pursue a career - and this is particularly difficult in Germany.

The Crunch - Children or Career?

"When a male manager has a family, it enhances his image; when a female manager has a family, it ruins her career." *Ursula Männle,* ***Frauen in der Politik, Civis mit Sonde 3-4/95***

In the old *Länder*, the conviction (on the part of both sexes) that a child should - and the word carries heavy moral weight - be raised by one of the parents is both strong and extremely prevalent. Other models (that an infant or small child is taken care of for significant periods of the day by a non-family member childminder as, for example, in England, or is sent to a day-

long crêche as in former East Germany or France, etc.) are generally not approved of. So unless there is a convenient grandmother around to take over the child-raising task, there is very little discussion in Germany about whether or not one parent should devote her or his self to the child/children for a number of years and make child-raising into her/his primary, albeit perhaps temporary, occupation. That to this day it is almost always the mother who is the exclusive child-raiser is more controversial. The current discussion thus centers on encouraging the father to participate in child-raising, either by taking it over completely or at least sharing it; on the creation of more part-time jobs to help Mommy/Daddy supplement income and get out of the house for a few hours a day; on making working hours more flexible; on improving and extending communications technology so that more parents can work from home. What is very rarely discussed is how both parents might be enabled to pursue full-time careers while their children are growing up. In other words, it is taken for granted that in a two-career family, one career has to be sacrificed during the child-raising period, even if it is clear that an absence of several years will destroy that career permanently. In Germany, it is practically always the woman who has to make the children-or-career choice. To decide for both is not only more difficult in Germany than in most other neighboring countries (as will be explained below) but turns the career mother (never father) into a social misfit.

Encouragement for Moms to Stay Home

"Women's politics have become more difficult. You keep having to counter the idea that at times when jobs are scarce, women should remember what their real roles are."

Claudia Nolte in ***Amica 1/97***

Since the Eighties, an impressive number of laws have been passed designed to make having children a more attractive proposition. A comprehensive law to protect pregnant women and those who have just given birth *(Mutterschutzgesetz)* is so far-reaching that not only can pregnant women not be fired, but women are actually forbidden to work for a minimum of two months after delivery while they continue to receive full pay. Another law provides the child-raising parent (who stays at home) with DM 600.- a month for the first two years of a child's life. Over 98 percent of the recipients of this financial aid are women. Moreover, one parent (but it's practically never Dad) has the right to take a three-year child-raising leave from her/his employer with a guaranteed job at the same pay level to return to, since the child-raiser cannot be fired during the time-off period. In 1993, 366,703 women were on child-raising leave, and a

grand total of 4763 men. And the trend is not encouraging: in 1995, the percentage of men had dropped slightly to under 1.5 percent.

In the Interest of the Majority

Partnership and children are the lifestyle priorities for most (German) women, followed by employment. ... To equate politics of equality with professional advancement would be to ignore reality. *German Federal Government Report for the 4th World Women's Conference*

It must be clearly stated: The above-mentioned and many other family-friendly laws are a godsend for the majority of women in Germany - for all those women, in fact, who freely choose to stay at home as wives and mothers, or who have jobs as opposed to careers.

Women with children (and despite the low birth-rate in the country as a whole, 65 percent of former West German and 78 percent of former East German women have at least one child) tend to opt for the so-called Three-Phase-Model: they drop out of the workforce when they have their first child, spend the next ten years or so bringing up their child/children and then return to the job market on a part-time basis. This model does not work quite so well at times of high unemployment, when older women have a difficult time finding a job even after a period of re-training and often remain jobless after their children have left the nest. What has changed in recent times is that an increasing number of younger women prefer not to leave the workforce altogether for an extended period of time, but would rather combine child-raising with a part-time outside job. A recent survey by the Allensbach Polling Institute shows that almost 50 percent of all German women (with or without children) consider that being a mother with a part-time job is an ideal solution. In the old *Länder*, 33 percent of women say that they can well imagine being a full-time mother and housewife; in the new *Länder*, only 13 percent find this traditional role acceptable.

Not much Choice ...

According to the German Federal Government Report for the 4th World Women's Conference, 77 percent of women who live with a partner and have children under 12 want part-time work. The sad fact is, if they want any kind of job at all, it can hardly be anything but part-time. There are essentially no crêches (pre-kindergarten daycare centers) in Germany and woefully

few kindergartens for children aged three to six. A 1992 law guaranteeing a place in a kindergarten to every child by 1996 failed to keep its promise and fulfillment is not on the horizon. Consequently many Moms cannot work at all unless they are able to come up with an individual, privately organized solution. And even if the children receive a place in a kindergarten, they are likely to be sent home at lunch time - perhaps because nobody cooks as well as Mom. Nevertheless, it is not until the children reach the ripe age of six and start school that Mom's real problems begin. Not only are there no full-day public schools in Germany (meaning, school is a morning-only affair), but there are no regular school hours either. Each term, the children are given a schedule which varies from day to day. Sometimes school starts at 8 am, sometimes at 10 am. Sometimes it ends at 11 am., sometimes at 1 pm. If a teacher is ill or absent for any reason, the children are sent home unannounced. If Mom happens to have a job... During school holidays, the children are at home. Day and other camps are still exceptional in Germany.

Only Foreigners Don't Understand

What is remarkable (to non-Germans) is that there is relatively little female dissatisfaction with this system. Women do not go to the barricades, do not form lobbies to insist on guaranteed school hours, much less full-day schools. On the contrary: the feeling that children should spend as little time as possible in school or away from home runs so deep that in the old *Länder*, attempts to organize supervised homework in the afternoon are usually doomed from the start. Polls show that 50 percent of women in the old *Länder* believe that full-day schools are actually harmful to children. For women who have no choice but to work (single mothers, families where the father does not earn enough) there are special child-care centers *(Kinderhorte)* where children can go after school. Unfortunately, there is considerable stigma attached to sending children to these centers, the mothers who do so are called *Rabenmutter* (literally raven-mothers, or according to Langenscheidt's dictionary, unnatural mothers), and the children themselves are considered disadvantaged.

Any Woman is a Potential Mother - and therefore an Economic Risk

"With regard to career promotion, for the mass of women the greatest handicap remains child-raising leave" *Heinz Weinmann, Director of Personnel, Hoechst AG, in* ***Stern, 28.5.97***

It is clear that combining motherhood and a career is particularly difficult in Germany because most women themselves doubt whether the two roles can (or more importantly, should) be compatible and as a result, make no effort to change an infrastructure that effectively keeps them at home. But - and this is where the true injustice lies - it is not only those women who decide to have children who are hindered in their careers. It is enough to be a woman of child-bearing age to be discriminated against. Just as the GDR *Muttipolitik* backfired and contributed to women not being given responsible jobs, the **FRG** social legislation giving pregnant women and child-raisers significant rights and benefits (see above) has also backfired, and with even more drastic results. Women (childless) are not simply refused promotion, they are often not hired from the start. Since an employer must reckon with the possibility that a woman will become pregnant (even if she voluntarily swears she will not) and take advantage of her legal rights, particularly child-raising leave, she is indeed an economic risk in a highly trained, highly paid position. Given the choice, most employers understandably prefer to hire a man, and there are always ways to circumvent the equal opportunity laws. To overcome the prejudice against women-who-might-get-pregnant, some women from the new *Lander* have gone so far as to have themselves sterilized, to be able to produce a document proving that they cannot have children (this practice seems to be on the wane).

Enterprises for the Enterprising

"More women will make it into top management positions only when more women are already in top management positions. And since we have only just embarked on this snowball course, we're going to have plenty to do for the next few decades."

Ursula Nelles, Director of the Institute of Criminology at the University of Munster,
in Stern 28.5.97

One way for women to beat the system is to set up in business for themselves, and this they are doing quite successfully. Of the over 3 million businesses in Germany, 800,000 are run by women. Their businesses tend to be small, with a modest turnover; women, it seems, are not as profit or expansion-minded as their male counterparts, nor are they high risk-takers. Perhaps this is why they fail less frequently - a fact noted by the *Deutsche Ausgleichsbank* in Bonn, which gives loans to start-up businesses. However, women are not very adventurous when it comes to choosing a sector; they tend to stick to beauty parlors, boutiques and shoe shops, where competition is high, instead of looking for potentially more rewarding niche-markets.

Conclusion

While most women in Germany want to have an occupation outside the home and achieve some financial independence, relatively few women seem to want to have a meaningful lifetime career. So there is little serious dissatisfaction with a system that encourages women to have jobs (full or part-time) which can easily be dropped during child-raising years, and resumed (or not) thereafter. Women generally accept that if they intend to pursue a career, they cannot have children, and therefore, there is no effective lobby for an infrastructure that would make it easier to combine motherhood with professional life. And while there is increasing talk about the contribution men should make towards family life, the figures clearly indicate that traditional roles have not significantly changed - except that women who decide to take on jobs simply add an extra task to the domestic ones they already have and continue to perform. For the rest, there are indeed German women who have careers, although they tend to get only so far up the hierarchical ladder before they encounter the glass ceiling. Competing in a traditional man's world is tough and it is probably true that a woman has to be twice as good as a man to achieve half the degree of success.

Postscript

Ironically, in the world of the future, traditional careers as we know them today may have little place. The concept of work is likely to change so radically that increasingly fewer people will have permanent full-time jobs or careers; the rest will engage in a portfolio of activities including occasional full-time work, part-time work, volunteer work, and different forms of self-employment. International business philosophers (British management guru Charles Handy and German sociologist Ulrich Beck, for example) have been arguing for years for different versions of the portfolio approach. An article entitled "Farewell to the Lifetime Job" by Roland Karle in the April 1997 issue of ***Semester Tip*** warns students to prepare for a life of constant professional change (a revolutionary concept in Germany, where people tend to remain what they were trained to be, even if they end up unemployed). In a recent ***Wirtschaftswoche*** interview on the worldwide development of capitalism and its impact on society and democracy, German-born British sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf suggests that men are inevitably going to have to adopt a far more flexible approach to work and life style, and in fact, end up doing what most women have always done as a matter of course: combine a variety of very different (and differently rewarded) activities. And since men find this "female" model

extremely difficult, says Lord Dahrendorf, it could be that women will have the advantage. That will certainly make a change.

Part 2

German Women in the Public Eye

The magazine ***Bunte*** recently asked a panel of men to choose the "50 Best German Women". The criteria used to rate the women were (in the following order): elegance, style, creativity, career, sex appeal and courage. The list was headed by Jill Sander (see below) and ended with the pop singer Nina Hagen. Among the top ten women were three wives: Christiane Herzog, Hannelore Kohl and Babs Becker (wife of tennis star Boris) and three top models. Jutta Limbach (see below) made it onto the list, not because she is president of the German Supreme Court, but because she knits sweaters for her husband. Sabine Christiansen (see below) was admired for her courage in getting pregnant (which she wasn't).

There are always women who make it to great prominence through their own talents, be they academic or creative, in business or in sports. Among the contemporary German women who have achieved high profile nationally or internationally, we have selected a disparate few to show that it is not absolutely necessary to be married to the right man to be successful.

Marion Gräfin Dönhoff: Germany's Grande Dame

Marion Gräfin Dönhoff is difficult to label, although Alice Schwarzer entitled her recent book about the intellectual Prussian aristocrat "The Red Countess" (*Die rote Gräfin*). Political commentator, modern historian, long-time publisher of her country's most respected weekly newspaper, *Die Zeit*, Marion Gräfin Dönhoff is not just an observer of the events of his century (she was born in 1909), she has risen to such prominence that she can certainly be said to have herself influenced some of the domestic and foreign policies of the Federal Republic, especially during the Social Democratic era (for example, when she championed a policy of reconciliation between the two Germanies during the Sixties). Her many publications, her political activities (she was co-founder and for many years vice president of the German Society for Foreign Policy), her acute and astute analytical powers have earned her international respect and recognition, and in addition to the doctorate she received at the University of Basel in 1933, she holds honorary doctorates from such other distinguished institutions as Smith College,

Columbia, The New School for Social Research and Georgetown. She has been awarded more prizes, medals and honors than even her greatest admirers can keep track of. Marion Gräfin Donhoff is one of the outstanding minds of the twentieth century, and both her country and her sex can be justifiably proud of her.

Alice Schwarzer: Germany's Top Feminist

The label "feminist" is usually an insult in Germany, so the fact that 18 percent of today's young women call themselves feminists is in itself impressive, says Germany's best-known professional *"Emanze"*, Alice Schwarzer. The self-proclaimed "old war-horse" of the women's movement in Germany claims she is not its spokeswoman, but admits that she has been made into its symbol. She is currently celebrating the 20th birthday of her "from women for women" magazine ***Emma*** (circulation: 100,000), an outspoken, cause-espousing bi-monthly, which over the years has earned itself respect, even from women who themselves would rather read ***Vogue***.

Journalist, writer, publisher, university lecturer, television personality - Alice Schwarzer has been a household name and face since the beginning of the Seventies when she caused a minor scandal by getting 374 women to publicly admit (in an article in the respectable magazine ***Stern***) to having had an abortion. This launched the "new" women's movement in the Federal Republic, and led to a long campaign against the law against abortion (not that the law was actually applied to women, says Ms Schwarzer, because who would have done the washing up if all the women who had had abortions were in prison?).

Alice Schwarzer is relentless in her fight against what she sees as the degradation and humiliation of women. Together with some like-minded friends, in 1978 she filed a complaint against ***Stern*** to stop the magazine from portraying women as sex objects on its cover (she ended up with a legal defeat but what she considered a moral victory). A decade later, ***Emma*** conducted a fierce antipornography campaign. Today, Ms Schwarzer (who sees herself as something of a lone fighter, but doesn't know how to clone herself) considers that a lot has been achieved in the past two decades, but that there is still a long way to go. The "superwoman" who is able to combine job, household, children and marriage is a male

creation, she claims. Women have to realize that they can't manage everything - they have to compromise.

Jil Sander: Success in Spades

Jil Sander is one of Germany's most successful self-made women. She is known throughout the world. Her business, which she turned into a public corporation in 1989, is booming, with yearly sales of about DM 3 billion. Jil Sander is not the first woman ever to break into the world of high fashion, but she is one of the very few, and today, she is on a par with Yves Saint Laurent, Valentino and Armani. There are other top German designers - Lagerfeld, Boss - but as a trend-setter in the field of exclusive design for women, Jil Sander is in a class of her own. Her latest coup (spring 1997) is a much acclaimed collection for men.

Jil Sander started out as a fashion reporter for women's magazines, soon became an editor and rose to be head of the PR department of the magazine ***Petra.*** But on the side, she was already experimenting with her own designs, and at age 25, she opened her first boutique. In 1973, she presented her debut collection, and it was a flop. Undaunted, she came out with another collection the following year, this time to great applause. Four years later, she was being hailed by the Japanese magazine ***High Fashion*** as one of the 12 best designers in the world.

Although today Jil Sander has learned to delegate (which she admits she found difficult at first), and although she does not run her company alone, she has remained the creative genius behind her collections. This makes her indispensable to the firm's success. However, she does not see this as a problem. At 54, she is still demonstrating the energy that took her to the top and has kept her there for almost a quarter of a century.

Four Women in Politics

Very few German women are interested enough in politics to join a political party - about 4 percent of women in the old *Länder* and 1 percent of women in the new *Länder*. Nevertheless, women in the old *Länder* have been pushing for better representation in parties and in parliaments since the Eighties, and this has led to quotas, either madatory or recommended. As a result, there is a scattering of women on executive boards, in the *Bundestag* (where they make up 26 percent of the members and where they hold 3 of the top 5 positions in the house

hierarchy) and in the govern .. :it. The two current female cabinet ministers are both from the new *Lander* and not too surprisingly, one of them, Claudia Nolte, heads the ministry which deals with women's affairs. This hybrid ministry also embraces families, senior citizens and youth (only the handicapped are missing) and employs more women than men (52 percent) – because, as Ms Nolte admits, it is not a ministry that anybody is very interested in.

Rita Süssmuth

The president of the *Bundestag*, Rita Süssmuth, is a relative newcomer to the political elite, but in the twelve years she has been in Bonn she has become known as an outspoken and independent lady who does not always follow her party (Christian Democratic Union) line. Her liberal positions on a number of issues, from Aids to abortion, from homosexual rights to rape in marriage, have provoked heated criticism from her more conservative male colleagues. This, however has not deterred the woman who has been described as a "foreign body in the Bonn operation" (***Süddeutsche Zeitung***, 17.2.97).

Ms Süssmuth started her career as an academic and was professor of education before taking an unlimited leave of absence to become a full-time politician. She has been involved in family politics and women's issues most of her life and in many capacities, from director of the research institute "Woman and Society" and chairperson of the Catholic commission "Marriage and Family", to chairperson of the CDU Women's Association (now re-named Women's Union). One of her first appointments in her meteoric Bonn career was as federal minister for Youth, Family and Health (1985), a post she was ideally suited for. Within three years, she had earned enough respect (despite her controversial thinking) to be elected president of the *Bundestag*, the second highest public office in the Federal Republic, and an office she still holds after nine years.

Antje Vollmer

A "passionate parliamentarian" in her own words, Antje Vollmer discovered her political vocation at the ripe age of 40 in the early Eighties, when she joined the Greens and entered the Bundestag. Since then, she has become one of the highest profile women in German politics, outspoken, controversial, a leading intellectual and theoretician who has been in large part responsible for shaping the present party, only a decade ago torn by opposing factions unable

to agree on a platform, but now united and in the past few years, remarkably successful throughout the country.

Antje Vollmer started out as a collector of academic degrees, including a doctorate, and spent many years in the service of the Protestant church as a clergywoman and as a teacher. Since she moved into politics, she has continued to be active on a variety of fronts, particularly as a writer and journalist for national newspapers and magazines (including the feminist ***Emma***). She has dedicated a lot of energy to improving the strained postwar relations between the Czechs and the Germans. There have been several periods when Ms. Vollmer has not been in the *Bundestag*, partly because of the Green policy of rotating their representatives, partly because of party and personal vicissitudes, but there has not been a time when Ms. Vollmer has disappeared from the public scene. She is currently vice president of the *Bundestag* (fitting for a passionate parliamentarian).

Monika Wulf-Mathies

Monika Wulf-Mathies has left the competition behind her most of her life. She earned a doctorate at the age of 26 (in 1968), and headed straight for Bonn, where she started out as an assistant spokesperson in the press office of Economics Minister Karl Schiller. A member of the Social Democratic Party, Ms. Wulf-Mathies moved steadily upwards in her political career and by the time she was in her mid-thirties, she was head of the department "Social and Societal Policy" in the Office of the Federal Chancellor. In 1976, she gave up the permanent security of her public service career when she was elected to the governing board of the trade union ÖTV (public service, transport and traffic), where she had been an active member for several years. She was given responsibility for the area of social, health and women's policies.

Women are not entirely exotic birds in the trade union world, but in 1982, when she was elected as ÖTV chairperson, Ms. Wulf-Mathies became the first woman to head a union belonging to the DGB (Federation of German Trade Unions, the umbrella organization embracing 16 major unions). From then on, she proved herself to be a relentless partner in bargaining for wages and conditions, a formidable champion of such issues as the 35-hour week at full pay (in this as in most fiercely controversial issues confronting unions and employers, she was a master of compromise). Re-elected on several occasions, she weathered a number of storms, particularly in the extremely difficult period after unification, when she had

a hard time satisfying the demands of the workers in the new *Länder*. In 1992, when the ÖTV bosses ended a strike against the wishes of the majority of union members, it looked as if Ms. Wulf-Mathies might lose her job, but she hung on with remarkable tenacity and was re-elected (albeit with a lower margin than in previous elections) the same year.

In early 1995, Ms. Wulf-Mathies made a significant move (a quantum leap according to the press) in her career: she left the raw climate of the ÖTV and moved to Brussels to become European Commissioner for Regional Policy. In the past two years, she has earned her stripes, speaking out for a social Europe and the principle of solidarity. For many Germans, "our Monika" is an admirable lady, one of the few politicians they feel they can trust.

Petra Roth

Petra Roth is a woman to watch. The mayor of Frankfurt am Main is a big fish in a relatively small pond; despite its status as a major European financial center (second only to London), Frankfurt is a mini-city, with only around 600,000 inhabitants. But Frankfurt's first lady has a certain Maggie Thatcher air about her, and it would not surprise those who have been following her career if she were to use her present position as a stepping stone from the local to the national arena.

Ms. Roth has worked her way up the ladder slowly but with great determination. She got a late start in politics; after leaving school and spending a year in London, she trained as a doctor's assistant, a job she practiced for five years. Then she busied herself at home, bringing up two children. She became a member of the Christian Democratic Union in 1972, but it was not until 1977 that she became a city councilor and increasingly active in party affairs.

Her breakthrough came in 1992, when she was elected head of the Frankfurt CDU. Promising to bring her party closer to the people, she campaigned fiercely in the 1993 municipal elections and ended up heading the strongest single faction in the Frankfurt parliament. Nevertheless, she had to wait another two years to become directly elected mayor in a city still run by an SPD/Green coalition.

The latest feather in her cap came just recently when she was elected president of the German Association of Cities and Towns, an organization which represents over 5,000 member cities, towns and communities.

Anne-Sophie Mutter: "When she plays the violin, the angels cry" (New York Times)

One of the few contemporary, young - still in her early thirties - German women whose name is internationally known violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter has been making headlines since she was a child. At age six she won first prize in the national youth music competition, *Jugend musiziert*. Soon recognized as a "talent of the century", she went from strength to strength, officially freed from having to attend normal school in order to concentrate on her musical education. She was hardly a teenager when in 1976 she was "discovered" by Herbert von Karajan and taken under his wing, and from then on, her successes have become almost too numerous to count. Among the early highlights, she played with Daniel Barenboim and the English Chamber Orchester (1977), Zubin Mehta and the New York Philharmonic (1980) and in between, with Karajan and the Berlin Philharmonic (1978), which led later that year to a sensational hit recording of Mozart's violin concerti 3 and 5. At the end of the Eighties, she turned more to contemporary music, and has tried to achieve a balance between avant garde and classical music ever since.

There is little that Anne-Sophie Mutter cannot afford, in more senses than one. She can choose what, with whom and when she plays. She possesses two Stradivari violins. She has held the first chair for solo violin at the Royal Academy of Music in London since 1986. And she is a generous, humanitarian performer who donates a lot of what she earns to deserving causes, from a foundation to support young violin talent to the project "Artists against Aids" in the U.S. She is currently hoping to raise DM 500,000 for a Rumanian orphanage at a concert she will give in Frankfurt/Main at the beginning of 1998.

Sabine Christiansen: More than Just a Pretty Face

German television, particularly the public channels, devote considerable time to news and commentary programs. In 1991, when the anchorman of one of the most popular nightly half-hour newscasts *Tagesthemen* stepped down, a lot of viewers hoped that the number two moderator, Sabine Christiansen, would take over the top position. Germany being Germany,

the job went to a man. Although there is an ever increasing number of women - mostly attractive (but not too sexy), blond and fairly young - in front of news, commentary and talk show cameras, equality in the media only goes so far. Curiously enough, there are more women in private than in public television (42 to 30 percent), but nowhere are there women right at the top.

Sabine Christiansen, who has continued as number two, is nevertheless a household face and voice, whose skilled handling of news and interviews have kept the ratings high. She started out as Lufthansa stewardess before moving into television and becoming a business news presenter in a local station.

Life in front of the camera was challenging and she was prepared to make sacrifices to move ahead in highly competitive field. "I have chosen a 14 hour-a-day job because I really love what I do," she told the newspaper ***Die Zeit*** in October 1996. "But I couldn't do it if I had children." She has had her present position for the past ten years and feels it is time to move on. In the fall, she will give up the news to moderate her own talk show.

Pina Bausch: Breaking the Rules

Pina Bausch needs little introduction to ballet lovers throughout the world. The woman who created a new form of dance and has been shocking and enchanting audiences since the mid-Seventies when she abandoned classical ballet and found her own unique direction is a living legend. Now approaching 60, she still travels tirelessly with her ensemble, the Wuppertal Dance Theater, which she has headed for quarter of a century. In 1973, when she was appointed ballet director and choreographer, she had already made a name for herself in the USA; she had studied at Juilliard and, as a member of the New American Ballet, had appeared at the Met. She had also toured Europe extensively. However, it was not until she could give full reign to her creative talents and imagination in Wuppertal that her name became synonymous with innovation. Her dance theater has been described as a theater of aesthetic contrasts, obsessed with fundamental questions of human existence.

Pina Bausch (who still dances herself very occasionally in one production called *Café Müller*) once appeared in a Fellini film (*E la nave va*, 1982) and in 1990 directed her own film (*Die Klage der Kaiserin*). She has won numerous prizes.

Jutta Limbach: Germany's Top Judge

To have a rule, there must be exceptions. Women do not generally reach the top of the ladder in Germany, but Jutta Limbach has one of the most prestigeous positions in the country. She is president of the *Bundesverfassungsgericht*, the German equivalent of the Supreme Court of the United States.

Jutta Limbach studied law and remained in an academic environment, collecting degrees (including a *Habilitation*, a German post-doctoral degree) and rising to full professor in the university hierarchy. In 1962, she joined the Social Democratic Party and became involved in politics; among her various activities, she served on the advisory board for family affairs in the federal Ministry for Youth, Wormen and Health. But it was not until 1989 that she moved into politics-proper, and was appointed Berlin Justice Senator in the SPD/Green coalition led by Walter Momper. Within a few short weeks, she attracted national attention with her outspoken positions on a number of controversial issues.

After the collapse of the German Democratic Republic and subsequent German unification in 1990, Jutta Limbach's office found itself with a large number of sensitive issues to deal with. The legal system in formerly divided Berlin had to be completely reorganized, ex-communist judges and public prosecutors had to be carefully checked, the question of GDR governmental corruption explored. At times, the Justice Senator came in for heavy criticism, especially in connection with the release of GDR party chief Erich Honecker. Nevertheless, she weathered the storms and in 1993, was elected to the *Bundesverfassungsgericht*. When Roman Herzog became federal president in 1994, his position as president of the court became vacant, and Jutta Limbach was voted in as his successor.

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